

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20240  
<http://www.blm.gov>

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EMS TRANSMISSION 09/12/2012  
Instruction Memorandum No. 2012-182  
Expires: 09/30/2013

To: All Washington Office and Field Office Officials  
From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning  
Subject: Collection of Meteorites on Public Land

**Program Areas:** Recreation, Cultural Resources, Lands and Realty, Minerals, Law Enforcement, and the National Landscape Conservation System

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) establishes policy governing the collection of meteorites found on public lands.

**Policy/Action:** The policy provides guidance to managers for administering the collection of meteorites on public lands in three use categories: casual collection of small quantities without a permit; scientific and educational use by permit under the authority of the Antiquities Act; and commercial collection of meteorites through the issuance of land use permits.

**Casual Collection:** Meteorites may be casually collected (i.e., free and without a permit), pursuant to BLM's regulations at 43 CFR 8365.1-5. In accordance with those regulations:

- Collection of meteorites is limited to certain public lands. Public lands closed to casual collection include: developed recreation sites, certain units of the National Landscape Conservation System, areas excluded from casual collection in a Land Use Plan such as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or a wilderness area, and areas closed by supplemental regulations;
- Individuals are limited to collecting what can be easily hand-carried, up to a maximum of ten pounds of meteorites per individual, per year;
- Only surface collection of meteorites using non-motorized and non-mechanical equipment is allowed (metal detectors may be used); and
- Casually-collected meteorites are for personal use only, and may not be bartered or sold for commercial purposes.

**Scientific and Educational Use:**

Individuals or institutions intending to collect meteorites for scientific research or educational use must obtain an Antiquities Act permit through a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Office, in accordance with 43 CFR 3.

- Applications for an Antiquities Act permit will be reviewed by the authorized officer in the BLM State Office with jurisdiction over the Cultural Resources program.
- Collection amounts allowed for scientific or educational use are specified in the permit and are not subject to the limits (ten pounds) established for casual collection.
- Meteorites collected under permit must be curated in an approved repository, and must meet the requirements for curation as defined in 36 CFR 79.

**Commercial Collection:**

- Unless otherwise prohibited by laws, regulations, land use plans or closures, meteorites may be commercially collected by individuals possessing a land use permit issued under the authority of the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Land use permits are issued by the local BLM office in accordance with the regulations in 43 CFR 2920.
- The applicant must pay an application fee, a purchase price based on either a unit price or a percentage of the fair market value of the removed material, and a reclamation fee as appropriate.
- The permittee must comply with all environmental laws and regulations for surface disturbing activities on public lands.
- Collection amounts allowed for commercial use are specified in the permit and are not subject to the limits (ten pounds) established for casual collection.

**Timeframe:** Effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Limited.

**Background:** Meteorites are natural objects originating in outer space that survive impact with the earth's surface. The extra-terrestrial origin of meteorites, as well as their relative rarity, has made them highly desirable to casual collectors, commercial collectors, and scientific researchers. Previously, the BLM has not formally addressed rules regarding collection of meteorites on public lands. However, recent media attention has increased public interest in meteorites as well as confusion about the legality of and limits to casual and commercial collection. Courts have long established that meteorites belong to the owner of the surface estate. Therefore, meteorites found on public lands are part of the BLM's surface estate, belong to the Federal Government, and must be managed as natural resources in accordance with the FLPMA of 1976.

Meteorites do not meet the definition of a mineral resource under the general mining and mineral laws. Therefore, mining claims cannot be located for meteorites.

This policy acknowledges a long-established tradition of collecting meteorites by individual hobbyists, but also recognizes that meteorites may be of significant scientific and commercial value. The policy provides direction for managing the resource and affords managers considerable discretion in accommodating demand from several types of collectors.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** None.

**Coordination:** This policy was coordinated among the BLM's Division of Recreation and Visitor Services; Division of Cultural, Paleontological Resources and Tribal Consultation; Division of Lands, Realty, and Cadastral Survey; Division of Solid Minerals; the National Landscape Conservation System Division; and BLM's Office of Law Enforcement and Security.

**Contact:** For questions regarding application of this policy, please contact Lucia Kulzon, National Paleontologist at (202) 912-7253 or [lkulzon@blm.gov](mailto:lkulzon@blm.gov), or Frank Jenks, Natural Resources Specialist with the Division of Recreation and Visitor Services at (208) 373-3993, or [fjenks@blm.gov](mailto:fjenks@blm.gov).

Signed by:  
Edwin L. Roberson  
Assistant Director  
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Authenticated by:  
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Division of IRM Governance, WO -560

1 Attachment

1 - FAQ on Meteorites on Public Lands (4 pp)

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